

VII. WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. FORCES IN 2-3 YEARS

Firm public commitment to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN in 2-3 years and deescalate its operations in the South whether or not a settlement is reached.

Beliefs of advocates

1. U.S. domestic priorities require U.S. commitment to be entirely out of SVN in a fixed time.
2. Withdrawal in 6-12 months would cause collapse of GVN while withdrawal over 2-3 years will give ARVN time to take over responsibility for fighting.
3. U.S. commitment will be met by continuing U.S. involvement for another 2-3 years while providing aid to GVN; communist SVN not intolerable.

Military

1. U.S. forces could be withdrawn at rate of 200,000 a year with all forces withdrawn by end of 1971 at latest.
2. As U.S. forces withdraw the U.S. military effort would be contracted and finally limited to defense of U.S. bases.

Paris Negotiations

1. Press energetically for mutual withdrawal with or without a political settlement.
- 2/ Recognize that U.S. commitment to total withdrawal substantially reduces U.S. leverage.

GVN

1. Make clear to GVN that U.S. fully intends to be out in 2-3 years.
2. Provide ARVN with all of equipment it can use.
3. Urge GVN to reform but do not threaten to cut off aid.

Costs

1. Financial cost reduced from \$24 billion now to \$7 billion by FY 1972 assuming complete withdrawal of U.S. forces (including air forces) and deescalation.
2. Casualties decline in proportion to troop withdrawal.

Consequences

1. If Hanoi steps up its efforts Communists could control much of SVN before U.S. withdraws.
2. Unless Hanoi withdraws Communist takeover likely after U.S. withdrawal. VC may be able to defeat ARVN even if Hanoi withdraws.
3. If Hanoi withdraws in response could lead to defacto-mutual withdrawal.
4. Paris settlement on favorable terms (for U.S.) very unlikely.
5. Outcome will depend on whether GVN/ARVN pulls itself together, collapses, or negotiates with NLF.
6. Public commitment to this option would strongly reduce incentives to DRV to come to agreement on mutual withdrawal or a political settlement, or to withdraw its forces at all. Thus, this option is likely to seem preferable to IV or V mainly if chances of such explicit or tacit agreements seem very low (e.g., after some months of substantive discussions in Paris had been totally discouraging).
7. Enemy morale goes up.